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Forecasting for Easter

3 April 2009

Easter is still a week away and our forecasters have been turning their attention to what the weather for the first big holiday weekend of the year may be like.

Only a few years ago we would not have been able to forecast this far ahead. Improvements in weather forecasting over the last 20 years, using ensemble forecasting, allow us to give an earlier indication of what the weather over Easter will be like. We are now able to give a much better overview of the Easter period, however this far ahead we are less certain than we would be only two days ahead.

To produce our forecasts we use one of the world's top-performing computer models. We run this model many times for each forecast, which provides a range of different outcomes. Looking at the current range of ensembles for Easter, there is a spread of different forecasts — from warm and dry for the end of the weekend, particularly in the south, to cool and showery throughout.

The Easter period is likely to have mixed weather. Temperatures are expected to range from 11 °C in Scotland to 14 °C in south-east England, although parts of the south could be warmer. There is a likelihood of showers, but some sheltered places further south and east may also have some good spells of warm spring sunshine.

Ewen McCallum, Chief Meteorologist, said "We are continually pushing our science to the limits. We have made incredible advances in forecasting over the last few decades, with a four-day forecast as accurate as a one-day forecast was about 30 years ago. However, precise detail a week ahead is at the cutting edge of forecasting."

Ensemble forecasting

Easter through the years